MAINE PUBLIC HEALTH ALERT NETWORK SYSTEM



Maine Department of Health and Human Services
Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention (Maine CDC)
(Formerly Bureau of Health)
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**ADVISORY - Important Information **

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TO: All HAN Recipients

FROM: Dr. Sheila Pinette, Director - Maine CDC

Dr. Stephen Sears, State Epidemiologist

SUBJECT: Influenza Arrives in Maine

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Influenza arrives in Maine

Influenza has officially arrived in Maine. The first laboratory confirmed case of seasonal influenza was reported to Maine CDC on December 23rd, 2011. An adult from Lincoln County tested positive for influenza B at Maine's Health and Environmental Testing Laboratory (HETL). The patient was not hospitalized, and had not recently traveled.

Influenza A (2009 H1N1), influenza A (H3), and influenza B are all circulating nationally. Maine had previously detected two swine-origin novel strains of influenza A in October, but this is the first lab confirmed case of seasonal influenza in the state.

Recommendations for this influenza season include:

- Clinicians should consider influenza in the differential diagnosis of febrile respiratory illnesses in patients of any age, encourage their high risk patients to be immunized against influenza if they have not already done so, and review updated recommendations of the use of antiviral medications for influenza prophylaxis and treatment.
 - Oseltamivir and zanamivir are the two drugs currently recommended for treatment and prophylaxis. Providers will be notified through the health alert network if national recommendations for treatment and prophylaxis are revised.
- Diagnostic labs should forward the first positive rapid influenza test specimens to HETL for confirmatory polymerase chain reaction (PCR). Testing through HETL is free of charge. Instructions on submitting specimens for flu testing can be found at: http://www.maine.gov/dhhs/mecdc/public-health-systems/health-and-environmental-testing/micro/submitting-samples.htm
- Infection preventionists, clinicians, school nurses and other reporting entities must report all suspected outbreaks of influenza to Maine CDC by phone at 1-800-821-5821 or by e-mail at disease.reporting@maine.gov.

Now that we know influenza is officially in Maine, it is important that we make every effort to try to limit its spread. The best way to prevent influenza is by getting vaccinated. Influenza vaccine is in Maine, and Maine CDC and national authorities recommend all individuals older than 6 months be immunized, even if they were vaccinated for influenza last season. All individuals with high risk conditions should be vaccinated as soon as possible.

As we enter the influenza season, it is important to remember the "No Flu 4 You" guidelines to help prevent illness including: Washing your hands; covering your cough; staying home when you're sick; and getting vaccinated.

For up-to-date information/recommendations on influenza for health professionals, go to http://www.cdc.gov/flu/professionals

For surveillance information in Maine, go to www.maineflu.gov